US Army Corps of Engineers®
New York District

Lower Passaic River Restoration Project, NJ

FACT SHEET

DESCRIPTION: The Passaic River Basin drains an area of 935 square miles of which 787 are in New Jersey and 148 are in New York. Seven major tributaries bring water into the main stem of the Passaic River. Local communities throughout the Passaic River Basin request a program of improvements that would restore the Passaic River. The Passaic River, including adjacent river shorelines, have been subject to repeated degradation as a result of historic and ongoing industrial and commercial activities, along with the associated impacts of urban development.

The lower portion of the basin is highly urbanized with significant development in its natural floodplains. The Corps of Engineers has completed several flood control projects in the basin. The Passaic River basin has experienced considerable development, particularly in the lower portion, resulting in significant losses of floodplains, fish spawning habitat, benthic habitat, wetlands, waterfowl nesting areas and other valuable fish and aquatic and terrestrial habitat areas. In addition, the natural hydrologic regime of the basin has been altered by the construction of numerous flood control structures within the basin.

The Lower Passaic River is a 17-mile tidal stretch from the Dundee Dam to the confluence with Newark Bay. The river has a long history of industrialization, which has resulted in degraded water quality, sediment contamination, loss of wetlands, and abandoned or underutilized properties along the shore. In June, 2000 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District (Corps) initiated a reconnaissance study to identify and inventory water resources and sediment quality related problems and needs in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. The reconnaissance study identified the Lower Passaic River as one of the priority restoration areas within the estuary.

The Lower Passaic River has also been designated an Operable Unit of the Diamond Alkali Superfund Site, which is the subject of a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (CERCLA). In recognition of the coincidental study areas and the related roles and responsibilities of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Corps along with the project sponsor, Office of Maritime Resources/New Jersey Department of Transportation (OMR/NJDOT), the agencies combined the EPA Superfund RI/FS and the Corps Feasibility Study into one comprehensive, cooperative study. This study is also a pilot project to coordinate remediation and restoration of degraded urban rivers in the United States under the Urban River Restoration Initiative (URRI). For the purpose of this study a 'governmental partnership' was formed and includes the Corps, EPA, OMR/NJDOT, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), to assist in recommending a comprehensive solution for the Lower Passaic River Basin.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the joint study is to develop a comprehensive watershed-based plan for the remediation and restoration of the Lower Passaic River Basin. The study area may be expanded based on models that will determine if recommended alternatives may be affected by other sources (i.e. Newark Bay, Hackensack River, and upstream of Dundee Dam). This will include one or more proposals for remedial actions as defined under CERCLA and the identification of ecosystem restoration opportunities in the study area to support broader estuary-wide restoration efforts. Remedial alternatives and ecosystem restoration measures will be analyzed together to ensure that the overall solution(s) to the complex problems posed by the contamination in the area are compatible and provide for acceptable exposure levels that are protective of human health and the environment and also effectuate the best mix of: long-term effectiveness and permanence; reduction of toxicity, mobility, or volume through treatment; short-term effectiveness; implementability; cost-effectiveness; compliance with applicable or relevant and appropriate regulations and stakeholder/public acceptance.

The study will include a cost-benefit analysis of potential remediation and restoration opportunities, as required pursuant to the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), an analysis of the risk posed by the existing conditions of contamination, as required by CERCLA, and consideration of a "no-action" alternative. Remediation may include: sediment removal, placement of caps, sediment decontamination in-situ or ex-situ, and engineering controls on combined sewer outfalls (CSOs) while complimenting restoration goals may include benthic habitat restoration, tidal wetland restoration, vegetative buffer creation, shoreline stabilization, and aquatic habitat improvement.

The primary project goals are to provide a plan that will result in:

- ✓ Remediation of contamination found in the river to reduce human health and ecological risks;
- ✓ Improvement of water quality in the river;
- ✓ Improvement and creation of aquatic habitat;
- ✓ Reduction in contaminant loading in the Passaic and the Hudson Raritan Estuary;
- ✓ A significant cost savings to the navigational dredging program related to dredged material management;
- ✓ Increased potential for future waterfront development, use and economic benefits for the surrounding regions.

AUTHORIZATION:

CORPS: House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Resolution dated 15 April 1999, Docket Number 2596, and

EPA: Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (CERCLA).

STATUS: The District executed the Feasibility Cost-Sharing Agreement on 30 June 2003 with the non-Federal partner, the New Jersey Department of Transportation-Office of Maritime Resources for a feasibility study for the tidally influenced portion of the Lower Passaic River (below the Dundee Dam). On June 22, 2004 EPA through its Superfund authorities entered into an administrative settlement (AOC) (http://www.ourpassaic.org/projectsites/premis_public/home/aoc.pdf) with 31 companies to pay $10,000,000 towards

the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study portion of the Lower Passaic River Restoration Project. The Passaic River feasibility study is ongoing with expected completion in five years.

WRDA PROJECT COST:

Estimated Feasibility Federal Cost (Corps)		$ 4,500,000
Estimated Feasibility Non-Federal Cost (OMR/NJDOT)		$ 4,500,000
	Total	$9,000,000

CERCLA PROJECT COST $10,000,000

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New Jersey	
District	**Senator/Representative**
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NJ	Honorable Frank Lautenberg
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